

Zambia - A Mammal Tour (BM)

Naturetrek Tour Report

11 - 18 November 2008



With thanks to everyone who contributed to this report with a special mention for Jo Bentley



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour Guides:	Josephat Martin
Participants:	Annie Graham Mick Graham Corinna Johanns Lindsay Peirson Matthew Williamson Lyn Adams Roy Adams Maureen Pearson Ian Cross Sheila Cross Jon Aldous Jo Bentley Stephen Eagar (Krusty) Sarah Kennedy Steve Braybrook

Day 1

Tuesday 11th November

Good BA flight with tasty food. Arrived at Lusaka and with some relief retrieved everyone's bags. The airport is small and a short walk round the block brought us into departures. Airport catering consisted of a small market type stall and we settled to watch the world go by. Four hours later we caught the onward flight which duly took us to Mfuwe International Airport!

We were met by Josephat and Martin, our luggage was loaded under the seats in the jeep and we set off to Kafunta. We were soon waving and smiling in response to the children along the road who were on their way home from school as we passed through tiny villages with some wonderful shop names. We got an impression of traditional village life with thatched huts and people resting under mango trees. Finally we turned off onto a dirt track to Kafunta.

It was very hot! We were greeted with cool towels to refresh and, after a few words from Josephat, brunch was served while the baboons cheerfully threw mango stones onto the deck nearby. A choice of a meat and veggie dishes, salad, fruit mix, and rice with fresh fruit to follow. The dining area and bar stretched along the side of the valley with great views of the passing wildlife (baboons, warthogs, Crowned Cranes). Once finished we were taken to our lodges and settled in. It was a while before the afternoon drive and we had time to relax on our balconies and get our bearings.

At 3.30 we were summoned by drumbeat for tea and cakes and a quick reminder about safety on the jeeps. Our first drive took us across the river valley in front of the lodge and down to the river. Following, well nearly following, a row of bamboo poles across what was left of the river, the jeep plunged in and we were soon on the other side.

A small group of elephants wandered down to the water for a drink and provided our first 'ellie' photo opportunity. Glossy Ibis glowed in the sun alongside Sacred Ibis while Carmine Bee-eaters glinted overhead. We could see their nest holes in the sandy bank above the river. Impala and puku watched us from the safety of the bush and we watched and listened to our first hippos lounging in the river (don't they make a loud noise?) with crocodiles lurking on the banks. Two more elephants shepherded a tiny one down to the river and crossed towards the lodge. In another elephant family a female was teaching a baby to select the choicest leaves and it was also practising its trunk skills.

As we drank our sundowners we watched our first impressive sunset with thunder and lightning dancing across the sky. We set off again with the spotlight raking the bush and soon we were being inspected by a juvenile Giant Eagle Owl perched in a tree above us. Josephat told us that he had been watching this individual for about three months and it was finding its own prey now although it still managed a fairly pathetic 'I'm hungry' wail for its parents who must have been nearby. The spotlight picked up the glow of eyes in the undergrowth and we added scrub hare, slender mongoose and genet to our sightings.

Then we went back across the river and home for dinner. This was a 4 course affair, with the bill of fare solemnly announced each evening and enjoyed with the river valley in the background. Amazingly there were virtually no insects around to spoil the atmosphere. Most of us retreated to bed in preparation for the early start in the morning.

Day 2

Wednesday 12th November

Fine, clear and relatively cool early in the day

An early morning knock on the door rounded us up for toast and cereal before we went off to the main gates through a rather beautiful grove of mopane trees and bushes. Their leaves were a delicate, fresh green and butterfly-shaped. Among them stood the occasional baobab tree, majestic despite their bark being eaten by the elephants for moisture during the dry season. At times the noise of the cicadas was deafening. Sadly we saw several dead hippos from the bridge. Although there is a large and thriving population of hippos in the park there are some worries about the number that are dying at the moment...what,ever the cause there were still a lot of very healthy looking hippos, from youngsters to some very, very formidable elders.

As we drove along there were frequent groups of elephants sampling the wild mangos beside the road, investigating each one with an incredibly delicate trunk tip until they found the best. We encountered our first bushbuck, resting just a few yards from the vehicle but inconspicuous on a bed of dead leaves. We watched a family of Ground Hornbills who strutted their stuff in front of the cameras. Woodland Kingfishers sang beside the jeep and flashed their iridescent turquoise wings.

A large group of White-backed Vultures were gathered round a hippo carcass, with a few Marabou Storks looking on like school teachers supervising in the playground. They looked well fed and several had their wings spread in the sun giving us a good view of their huge wing span. A particularly well fed bird caused a stir as the branch it was sitting on collapsed causing a flurry of ruffled feathers. Here we also experienced our first 'taste' of eau de hippo!! We moved on to see Saddle-billed Storks on incredibly long legs, and a lioness strolled by giving us a cursory glance.

Coffee break was taken under a tree with White-fronted Bee-eaters looking on and White-browed Sparrowweavers flitting in and out of their untidy nests just above our heads. We also saw flocks of Lillian's Lovebirds. On the move again and a Martial Eagle high in a tree surveyed the area and we worried about the potential fate of a Monitor Lizard stomping along the side of a lodge side lake. Crocodiles were lurking on the banks and another dead hippo lay in the water watched by a magnificent Fish Eagle.

Back at the lodge we had time to freshen up before the drums summoned us to lunch, a buffet with a tasty range of dishes. The group settled down to sit out the midday heat by relaxing on their balconies or round the pool. A family of warthogs were mud bathing in front of the lodge and the Puku stood around in the sun apparently immune to the heat. The impala found shelter under some scattered bushes and even the baboons settled down for a siesta punctuated by the occasional noisy squabble.

As the heat began to ease we gathered our belongings and wandered back to the bar for tea and cake before setting off again on the jeeps. Sarah and Krusty were missing but more of that later. Just outside the lodge we found our first small group of giraffe and watched them until they strolled into the bush and vanished. How do they do that? We headed back to the main park entrance and soon found another, bigger, group of giraffe on the edge of an area with a few scattered trees which were being systematically wrecked by a group of elephants looking for titbits. A small group of zebra were browsing – our first view of this species.

We carried on past the dead hippo pool, now without its hippo, and homed in on more vultures soaring around. We soon realised that we had found the hippo (previously from the pool) which had been dragged away from the lodge, understandably given the smell! A group of lionesses and cubs were attacking the corpse although they were making little impression. The youngsters were climbing about on it and one was chewing away at its 'armpit'. Another was more interested in the rope that had been used to drag it away from the lodge. The Vultures waited patiently in the trees nearby. The smell was serious! We moved well out of range before we stopped for sundowners and watched another glorious sunset.

We set off again with the searchlight picking out sparkling eyes watching us from all around. One of the animals was a Sharpe's Grysbok, a tiny antelope no more than two feet high, and finally a hyena slunk on by. Martin took one land rover round the back of the lodge and we saw a lone hyena guarding yet another hippo carcass, apparently not believing its luck that no other predators were around. Another interesting encounter was with a Black-necked Spitting Cobra which slithered across the road just in front of us.

Drinks and dinner were very welcome although Sarah and Krusty were still missing. The noise of the bullfrogs was an interesting backdrop.

Day 3

Thursday 13th November

Krusty arrived at breakfast with a huge grin from ear to ear and we discovered that he had proposed to Sarah last night and she had said yes. What a romantic and what a nice start to our day too! By 6.00 we were in the jeeps and off towards the park entrance again. Near the lodge we found two young giraffes with their mothers. We watched them until they melted into the bush.

Soon after we crossed the bridge into the park we found another group. The giraffe were hosting Red and Yellow-billed Oxpeckers which were busily grooming them and the group steadily increased until there were at least 12 including an engaging trio of youngsters and a big, dark coated male who kept himself aloof from the main group (and the cameras) and took a dignified stroll across the open area. As the rest of the giraffe headed after him the elephants moved away and Martin explained that they tended to keep some distance between them.

We revisited the hippo but all was quiet. One lioness was on guard and we could see the other lions, including a big male, resting under the scrub about 400 metres away. Even the vultures seemed to have had enough and were sitting around in the trees. A lone hippo was heading off to find a pool before it got too hot. We were worried about the hippos by now. Although it was possible that the deaths were simply due to natural causes at the end of the dry season, there was a suspicion that it might be some sort of disease and the National Park scientists were investigating. Meanwhile we were treated to stunning views of Lilac-breasted Rollers and Carmine Bee-eaters perched high on bush tops in the sun light and Red-billed Hornbills perched in easy camera range.

Just before coffee time at the side of the dried up river bed we spotted our first Burchell's Zebra with their broad dark stripes stretching right round their bodies. As we wound our way through the bush Sheila spotted a Water Thick-knee (Dikkop), frozen still and incredibly well camouflaged – after watching it for a while we realised there was a second one doing a very good imitation of a stick within a meter or so. Further on we spotted a group of Spur-winged Geese and the aptly named Knob-billed Ducks supervised by a nearby adult Martial Eagle. Just before crossing the river a trio of camera shy buffalo disappeared into the bush and we headed back for brunch. By this time the middle of the day had settled into a very pleasant routine of cooling swims and a relax poolside or on the balcony of our lodges until the temperature began to ease.

We set off again across the river, and perched on a tree trunk we found a Giant Kingfisher posing for photos. There was a good range of waders including Blacksmith Plover and Three-banded Plover with more Sacred Ibis and Hadedda Ibis with their luminous green wing markings. We spent some time along the river bed spotting more crocodiles. One was stalking an Egyptian Goose with a group of goslings but the goose was wise to it and shepherded its young away from the waters edge, although she took her time.

There were lots of hippos in the water of all ages and sizes and we were impressed by their yawns and motorised vocals. There was a good deal of pushing and shoving going on and it was fascinating to see them appear, yawn and disappear under the water again. Further on we caught up with our young Eagle Owl again, still calling hopefully for food. In a gully another Egyptian Goose was alarm calling and shepherding her goslings to safety. Our sundowner stop gave us panoramic views along the river and another magnificent sunset ushering in a full moon. Camera know-how was exchanged to maximise the photo opportunities.

Back in camp there was a pre supper elephant invasion and we were confined to lodges until they had been persuaded to move on. While we were eating, several hippos and elephants were close to the restaurant on the river bed, glowing softly in the yellow spotlights of the lodge.

Day 4

Friday 14th November

Bright and clear early on – temp rising to very hot

The bush walk group set off with Josephat and Patrick providing armed escort. As we walked we examined tracks and extended our knowledge of toiletry facts adding a whole new dimension to the rest of our expeditions! Impala and Puku were much more wary of us on foot and we watched a very young impala orphan which had attached itself to a group of puku vainly hoping that they would adopt it. We had great views of a Lesser Grey Shrike before we retreated to the jeep for a drink and return to Kafunta via the river bed and a round up of the waders beside the water.

Meanwhile out with the Jeep party - not a lot new was noted – the main highlight was seeing the herd of giraffes which we saw the previous day. New birds included African Hoopoe, Wire-tailed Swallow, African Darter, Swainson's Guineafowl, Redfooted Falcon, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove and White-crested Helmet-shrike.

After lunch some of group went off to the village. The journey to Malama took about half an hour, and Ian and Sheila met American doctor, Terry O'Rourke at the village clinic. He was their latest volunteer medic, staying for a three month tour of duty. He provided medical cover for tourists visiting the park as well as emergency care for the local Zambians. Terry told us that the most harrowing situation he had dealt with was a local Zambian fisherman who had been gored by an elephant. One tusk had passed through the ribcage, luckily missing major vessels but causing the lung to collapse. The fisherman had a broken leg, probably because he had been stamped on by the elephant. The staff at the village clinic could only patch him up, give pain relief and send him on to the local district hospital. Terry kept fit by jogging in the early morning, and he gave us a smile and a wave when we passed him on the road on our way to the Park entrance the following day.

The village that we visited was not the village that is the most local to Kafunta. It was one where there is a community project underway that Josephat is quite heavily involved in. The project aims to build a school (2 classrooms & a store) plus houses for 2 teachers & also somewhere for the orphans of the village. We were made very welcome by the local headman, his second wife (of three) and what appeared to be the whole population of primary age children in the village. There were chairs set out for us – fortunately in the shade – where we sat & listened to the chief chat about the village & the project. There were several children gathered who put on a show of singing & dancing for us (was it just me or did all the songs appear use the same tune – “Clementine”?). The chief was wearing a pair (but not a pari!) of flip flops – 1 green & 1 yellow of similar design.

After being entertained by the children under the shade of a wild mango tree which served as the village centre, Josephat drove us, the chief & wife No.2 through the village to the area where the school & project is located. We inspected the ruin of the old school, which had been destroyed in a storm, and were shown the site of the new building, which was still waste ground. It was really hot!! The children all ran along behind us & by the time we got there their numbers had multiplied by at least 5 & they had become more exuberant & had acquired a few trophy mangos. The current school is a wooden framework open-ended shelter with approx 1/8th of the thatched roof in place. The remainder of the roof had blown away during some high winds some weeks before. The project has commenced with the school store – foundations & maybe 3 courses of bricks up so far. Levison, the Headman, explained that the building would be a community project largely involving people from the local area, and that they would make the bricks themselves but would need some specialist workers from further afield. We walked back through the fields with laughing and chattering children attaching themselves to all of us, holding our hands and trying to communicate in their limited English whilst doing their best to distract us from the chief's explanation of village life. Each of us acquired one or two children to hold our hands.

One little boy called Matthew attached himself to Matthew & didn't let him out of his sight. Matthew also received much admiration for his very beautiful girlfriend & by the time we got back to the chairs (just gotta sit down!!) he and Lyndsay were surrounded by a sea of children. Taking photographs was a nightmare as all the children wanted to be in them & then they all wanted to see themselves (& the mangos!) on the camera.

In the village the women explained to us something of their domestic routines (for example the kitchen and loo are in separate buildings) and let us look inside their living quarters. They explained that special pots for cooling water are made of clay, with the fine deposit from termite mounds being particularly useful for this. We also saw the area where crops are cultivated. We found out that the men of the village work outside the village; Levison works at Flat Dogs, another Lodge, and other men fish or do a variety of other work. It was a fascinating insight into traditional village life. We also saw a straw structure currently in use as a school for 84 children, about 40% of whom are orphans. We finished off watching the children, and then the womenfolk, doing high-energy dances before we signed the visitors' book and were dragged reluctantly onto the jeep, with everyone wanting to shake our hands before we waved goodbye.

Those of us who had stayed in camp met up with the village party at the main bridge with a Fish Eagle watching us in the setting sun. Jacanas were clambering about on a nearby hippo and we watched a Pied Kingfisher fishing for its tea. The light was perfect for photos. Despite the cooler early morning the heat had really built up and the clouds were gathering. Ponchos were broken out and we headed for the edge of clouds as the rain started. Instantly it was cooler and to our delight we out-ran the rain before we got too wet. We passed the lion/hippo site and were amazed to see how little of the hippo remained.

When we got back to the lodge we found that the electric had switched onto backup and water had temporarily gone off. The thunder storm built up and accompanied dinner with an impressive lightning display.

Day 5

Saturday 15th November

The second bush walk group set off with Martin and Patrick...like the group on the previous day, our walk contained lots of information of animal bodily functions, including the use of impala poo as counters in schools! We also learned about the various uses of termite mounds. A huge hippo was snoozing in a gully; we walked up and peered down at him. He woke with a start and ran off bristling with annoyance. We walked up close to a sausage tree, eyeing the gourds warily, and fearful in case one of these 15kg giants fell on our heads.

As the jeep party set off there weren't many animals around but the birds were enjoying the freshness after the rains. The whole landscape was turning green in front of our eyes and early flowers seemed to have appeared overnight. Early morning Glossy Long-tailed Starlings squawked and fussed in the trees and the now familiar Woodland Kingfisher and Carmine Bee-eaters called all around. We drove through cicada alley and stopped to find one to look at. It was a relief to move on as the din that they make in the trees is truly impressive. On across the bridge we found a Malachite Kingfisher displaying its rich blue colouring. The elephants were out looking for mangos and we found a curious young puku exploring its world until mum decided it had got close enough to the jeep and called it back, and gave it a quick wash and brush up before moving on. A young warthog was learning how to dig alongside its mum.

A puku male was trying his best to interest a female who remained firmly sitting down for ages despite him nudging her none too gently. When she did eventually respond he instantly lost interest and wandered off. By the time we headed back for the lodge it was warming up nicely and the pool seemed particularly attractive after lunch.

As the evening party set off on game drives, some of the group instead planned a walk around the lodge. The sky was becoming more interesting by the minute as a storm built up with every kind of lightning dancing across the horizon. Suddenly a strong wind blew through the camp lifting the curtains to almost horizontal, and blowing anything loose across the lodges, and then the heavens opened and it rained in bucketfuls. The campsite was awash in minutes, the temperature dropped, the air felt fresh and the electricity went off! The idea of a walk seemed very unappealing. Meanwhile out on the jeeps we saw our first kudu, animals that were much more shy than impala or puku despite their greater size, as well as a family of lions playing very energetically.

Before sundowners, though, the electrical storm was becoming so spectacular that more of us were watching it than searching for wildlife. It was clear a big storm was brewing, so we agreed to call off the night drive and return to the lodge. Ponchos were handed out but most of us had problems keeping the poppers fixed in the high wind. We'd only gone a few yards when the rain started hammering down and the lightning was cracking right above us. Martin's driving on the way home was impressive in near zero visibility. There was one point when we were driving across what looked like a lake with trees & stumps sticking up all over.

A group of lions were on the move. There were perhaps 4 lionesses (maybe some juveniles?) & 3 cubs. The group were moving purposefully but were in no hurry. The cubs were taking much longer to travel the distance because they were so busy playing as they went. The lionesses acted resigned & just settled down to wait until the cubs caught up before moving on. It was wonderful to watch & amazing that we had a break in the rain just at that time – our reward for getting so wet! The rain started to get a bit heavier again so we headed home. On arriving back at Kafunta we thanked Martin & tried to congratulate him on his driving prowess in such difficult conditions but he just shrugged it off as nothing out of the ordinary!

As the rain eased off back in Kafunta the home party gathered in the bar – where else! Two wires had blown together and shorted out one of the transmitters and the staff was busy organising a repair job. We rescued Maureen from her lodge and settled down to wait for the rest of the party to find their way home. Amazingly dinner was served on time with the customary announcement – starters, second starters, main course and dessert - and was all very welcome.

Day 6

Sunday 16th November

Clear and cool after the storm and you could almost see the plants growing

The morning drive was under clear blue skies. We had some lovely views of a young zebra enjoying the fresh grass and elephant and giraffe were out in force. Josephat stopped several times to prune tendrils that were rapidly growing across the tracks and the landscape had changed from dry and parched to lush green in the few days we had been at Kafunta. We found a pair of Saddle-billed Storks perched in a tree at their nest and watched a Trumpeter Hornbill with a totally unreal beak.

Morning break was under a tree with weavers building nests and at last we found out how they started the construction. Some of the Sparrow Weavers were so intent on building that they were collecting grass from around our feet! Their wild constructions contrasted with the Masked Weaver nests which were much neater. In a nearby tree we spotted the big communal nests of some Buffalo Weavers. A Tawny Eagle drifted by. We added another animal to worry about as we spotted a very young elephant that had clearly lost part of its trunk but Josephat and Martin assured us that it would adapt. By brunch time the temperature had crept up again and it didn't take long to retreat to the pool and the surrounding shade.

We started our evening drive at the river to sort our waders before moving on to the mammal we'd been looking for all week. Under a tree we found a carcass that had been eaten from the hind quarters, apparently characteristic of a leopard kill, and the carcass was already buzzing with some impressive insects including some 'blue bottles' creating a vivid turquoise band across its abdomen. We moved away to let the leopard eat in peace and soon found a lioness with two well grown cubs, a female and her brother whose mane was just beginning to grow. As we watched we realised the lioness had a problem with a swollen hind leg and was walking very badly. The young male wandered off and his sister used a nearby tree as a scratching post – just like our cat at home. She then decided to shin up the tree and surveyed the rather surprised occupants of our jeep from above. We obviously weren't to her taste luckily as she eventually climbed back down and wandered off.

Meanwhile her brother, who didn't seem to be the brightest lion in the pride, was calling and looking for the rest of the family in completely the wrong direction. His sister settled down in the open patiently watching him as he looked in vain. Eventually Josephat took pity and imitating a lion call grabbed his attention and he finally got the message. We got some lovely pictures as the two young animals greeted each other rolling on the ground and batting each other with their paws. Mum arrived and joined in too. The male lion then went up the tree after being reunited with the others; the funny bit was his problem in getting back down on the ground!

Sundowners were enjoyed on the riverbank watching and listening to a raft of hippos wallowing grumpily in the river below. As we moved away they were clambering out of the river to start their evening feed on fresh new grass. After our final sundowners we headed back to the leopard. As we drove along the path, we caught sight of it climbing onto a large overhanging branch, checking out for competitors, looking around in all directions. Clearly we didn't count, because Josephat and Martin took the landrovers under the branch so that we could get better views from the other side. After a few minutes it strolled down the branch and started attacking the dead impala and chomped away merrily, uncaring of our presence and of the spotlights trained on it. It was pretty gory to see it ripping out the entrails and hear the ribs being broken. After it had eaten enough it was intent on dragging it away to conceal it in the bushes. It was clearly still too big to manoeuvre up a tree and given the smell drifting across it was going to be difficult to conceal. We spent over half an hour close up to a big cat at night and we all found the experience awe-inspiring.

We found our way back to camp but not before hearing a hyena calling somewhere in the bush.

Back at Kafunta we were greeted by an explosion of insects brought out by the rains and the mosquito nets came in very useful although there still didn't appear to be any mossies.

Day 7

Monday 17th November

Our final morning drive – we headed straight back to the leopard site to find a very fat and happy-looking hyena lying beside some bushes. It didn't take long to realise that the carcass was hidden inside and the leopard had lost its meal and moved on. We soon found a big male giraffe lying in the shade. We knew that this was unusual although it was sitting with its neck stretched up in the right position to keep its digestive system working. The guides have a system of reporting anything unusual to the National Park wardens to help monitor the health and the security of the animals in the park so Josephat encouraged the giraffe to get up to check whether there was a problem. Although it finally got up OK it became clear that it had a problem with one of its front legs although it was still quite mobile – hopefully just a strain.

Just round the corner we encountered a very friendly warthog called Robert – he had been hand raised and released but was totally unconcerned by human company and provided some lovely close up views of Martin scratching its neck and tickling it behind the ears. We drove on, pausing for a very handsome group of waterbuck, and stopped for coffee near the river. Some of the group attempted to photograph some tiny bright red velvet mites while others were fascinated by the efforts of some dung beetles that were dragging seemingly impossible sized twigs through a crack in the ground. Group photos were taken round the jeep once we had remembered how to use the delay on our cameras and we set off back to camp for the last time.

We completed our packing and some of us managed a final swim before brunch. Martin and Josephat were watching the skies and predicting rain in the afternoon as we ate and enjoyed the now traditional attempt by the local ground squirrels to share in our buffet.

Soon the jeeps were loaded and final farewell and thanks completed and we set off for the airport. Once again the journey involved a lot of waving to local children and we enjoyed the range of shop names along the roadside. There were stalls selling fruit and veg, some amazing loads being moved around by bike including a very swish looking settee and a mattress. There were schools and churches, shops and houses scattered all along the roadside. Buildings ranged from straw and thatched huts to brick built homes, quite a few under construction. In places we could see kilns where the dark red bricks were being made.

Some of the group had requested a visit to Tribal Textiles on the way and we arrived as the sky darkened. After a quick consultation Josephat and Martin loaded the bags into one jeep and Martin whisked them off to the airport. After a quick look round some stalls selling crafts using materials collected from the bush we went to look at the textile workshops only to find that everyone had just stopped for lunch. There was nothing for it but to move into the showroom and admire some beautifully made textiles. Meanwhile the first few drops of rain filtered through the trees.

Some of us eyed the weather and decided that the quicker we got to the airport the drier we might stay and took off, ponchos wrapped tightly round. By the time we arrived at Mfuwe International airport it was raining hard and we shot into departures. The second group arrived shortly after sporting some noticeably wet patches. A visit to Moondogs' Café and book corner seemed out of the question even though it was less than 100 yards away!

We checked in and watched the incoming flight land on a runway more like a river as the rain continued to pour down. To our relief the rain eased off, we said our farewells to Josephat and Martin and our luggage was loaded. We didn't need the big umbrellas that our 'airline' had provided as we embarked on our 18 seater plane.

It all looked good until the pilot completed his outside inspection and came back to the cabin and beckoned to the stewardess who followed him outside. They peered at the tyre on the right of the aircraft, the stewardess kicked it a couple of times and shook her head. A burst tyre! Soon we were back in the airport watching as 7 or 8 airport officials peered under the plane and discussed the next move with our crew. An engineer was summoned from Lusaka, an hour's flight away and we realised that we were free to wander.

Moondogs Café beckoned and we arrived to find the pilot and stewardess already there ordering a snack. We settled down to wait with a beer. It was obviously an important location with radio and internet connections, airport café, bookshop and local meeting place. The afternoon passed in very relaxed fashion while we speculated on how long the engineer would take. A representative of Zambian Airways came in and arranged complimentary soft drinks and crisps for us all and at about 6pm the engineer arrived with a spare wheel. We watched from the departure lounge as floodlights were organised and the wheel replaced. Soon we were back on board and off to Lusaka.

Our hotel in Lusaka was comfortable and we booked breakfast for the ungodly hour of 5.30, some of us grabbed something to eat and we all retired for the night.

Day 8

Tuesday 18th November

Back at the airport we waited while the Jo'burg flight was checked in, we checked in ourselves and waited in the departure lounge. The flight was on time, the food good and we arrived in London on time. Baggage was retrieved, farewells said and we ventured out into the cold...Zambia had captivated all of us and we agreed that the group had been one of the best. Thanks Naturetrek.

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk to sign up.

Naturetrek Facebook

We are delighted to launch the Naturetrek Facebook page so that participants of Naturetrek tours can remain in touch after the holiday and share photos, comments and future travel plans.

Setting up a personal profile at www.facebook.com is quick, free and easy. The [Naturetrek Facebook page](#) is now live; do please pay us a visit!